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LETTER DATED 11 AUGUST 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the statement issued by the Burundi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation concerning the allegations made by Amnesty International in a report published on 15 July 1997 regarding what it calls the Government of Burundi's policy of forcibly rounding up the Hutu population.

I take this opportunity to transmit to you for your further information the opening statement from the press conference held by His Excellency Mr. Luc Rukingama, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi, at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 15 July 1997.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Gamaliel NDARUZANIYE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

[Original: French]

Statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation at Bujumbura on 8 August 1997

1. In a report published on 15 July 1997, Amnesty International has once again misled the international community regarding what it calls the Government of Burundi's policy of forcibly rounding up the Hutu population.

2. Based on this document, which is clearly inspired by circles hostile to the ongoing peace process in Burundi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation would like to recall the following:

3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation regrets that so prestigious an organization as Amnesty International should go along with a few politicians who would like to make a mockery of any measure the Government takes to protect citizens, at a time when peace and security are beginning to be restored in the country.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation would like to recall that there has never been any policy of forcibly rounding up the population in Burundi. The people have always come together spontaneously in their efforts to flee from the violent armed bands which Amnesty International has been careful not to condemn. The Government has a duty to protect the displaced populations so as to prevent any massacres and pogroms of the type that occurred in, for example, Teza, Bugendana and Buta.

4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation would also like to denounce Amnesty International's tendency to try to divide the war victims even in their misfortune. For the Government of Burundi there are no lucky ones among the displaced persons, no fortunate ones among those who have been scattered, nor are any of those who have come together better off than the others; there are simply Burundi victims of the war although those intent on spreading propaganda seek to divide them according to the old ethnic categories. They all need assistance and the Government is doing everything within its power, without making any distinction.

5. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation would like to appeal for objectivity in Amnesty International's reports. It supports the noble cause of safeguarding human rights in the world in general and in Burundi in particular. The rounding up of the population following the crisis is therefore a response to the pressing need to uphold that noblest of all rights: the right to life.

It is also a temporary situation, for in those places where security has been restored all these victims are beginning to return to their homes. That, for example, is what is happening in a few villages in Kayanza and Karusi provinces. For what the politicians who hunger for popularity do not say is that the armed bands which have been roaming the hills in recent times have

decimated everything within their path, including the animals; this made it essential to have a programme for the protection of all the threatened population.

Annex II

[Original: English]

Press conference of the Minister of External Relations and Cooperation of Burundi at United Nations Headquarters on 15 July 1997

Supporting the peace process in Burundi

One of the main objectives that the Transitional Government is committed to achieving, as was made public in a statement on 25 July 1996, is to set up a strong basis for lasting peace through the implementation of a peace process sustained by dialogue and for which the ultimate goal is to build up national institutions by consensus.

The decision to launch a positive dialogue with all social and political forces, including armed groups, constitutes an act of sovereignty that does not bear any external pressure. The peace process thus means to be inclusive and open to all, namely the Government, the Parliament, the political parties, civil society and armed groups.

1. Organizing the peace process

1.1. A national debate will be organized in order to prepare the population psychologically for negotiations. The first stage has come to an end and the second stage will start soon. In this context, the delegates of the population will deal with all fundamental issues.

1.2. Peace conferences will be organized both in the country and abroad in order to give Burundians who live in the country and abroad the opportunity to exchange their views on controversial issues.

1.3. A political dialogue open to all parties will be organized in cooperation with regional and international mediation. These negotiations will be open to all parties. It is understood that this stage will start with the cessation of hostilities and will be marked by the writing of a new constitution. It is expected that the new constitution will provide the necessary guarantees for the protection and smooth running of the national institutions, security for all, the eradication of the ideology of genocide, and will ensure democratic governance and human rights. It will be concluded by a general peace accord.

However, it is worth noting that for the peace process to succeed a favourable environment is required that is propitious to dialogue.

2. Creating favourable conditions for dialogue

2.1. Removing the stumbling block of the economic sanctions

The economic blockade that a number of neighbouring countries imposed illegally on Burundi as early as 31 July 1996 has been a great hindrance to the first stages of the peace process. The extreme impoverishment of the Burundian population, which has been severely deprived of all essential commodities, such as medicines, food, fertilizers, seeds and fuel, has led the people to become resistant to and sceptical of the proposed peace process.

Furthermore, the economic sanctions have deprived the Government of the necessary means to make the country operational.

On the humanitarian, social and economic side, the country has almost collapsed.

As a consequence, the Government of Burundi expresses its eager demand that the international community exert pressure so that this economic blockade, which benefits only a few while it strikes very severely at the most vulnerable groups of society, will be lifted completely.

In the meantime, the Arusha IV Heads of State's Summit decision to ease the sanctions should be implemented thoroughly and immediately.

2.2. Controlling terrorist groups

The terrorist and genocidal gangs, which have caused death and spread distress and have indiscriminately slaughtered innocent women, elders and children, make use of some neighbouring countries as their rear-base. The gangs, which are comprised of members of the Conseil national de défense de la démocratie (CNDD), the notorious Interahamwe militia and the former Rwandan and Zairean forces and are devastating the whole of the Great Lakes region, should be monitored and made harmless. To that end, the international community should play a decisive role.

2.3. Setting up communication and dialogue channels with neighbouring countries

We expect the United Republic of Tanzania, as a neighbour, to allow the Burundi Embassy in Dar es Salaam to work normally and thus facilitate diplomatic communications. For the past year our diplomatic mission has been under occupation by CNDD terrorist and genocidal groups in violation of all rules and laws. We lock forward to the implementation by the Tanzanian authority of its commitments to that end.

2.4. Launching an international tribunal for Burundi

More than 150,000 people have been slaughtered since October 1993 solely because of their ethnic origin or political affiliation.

An international commission of inquiry was sent to Burundi and confirmed that acts of genocide had been committed in Burundi. As a consequence, many

international observers have recommended the creation of an international tribunal for Burundi. The Government of Burundi has also made several requests to the United Nations.

In order to ensure the eradication of impunity, to punish the heinous crime against mankind which is genocide, to build a viable base for the current peace process, the Government of Burundi makes an urgent appeal for the creation of an international tribunal for Burundi.

3. Providing the necessary assistance to the peace process

Needless to say, the national economy was bled dry by the combined effects of the four-year crisis and an unprecedented economic blockade. The international community, which has tirelessly expressed concern and provided assistance to Burundi, should help the country decisively in the humanitarian field for reconstruction and through cooperation for economic revival and development.